

**What Is Claimed Is:**

- 1           1.       A method for managing security policies in a distributed  
2 computing system, wherein security policies determine access rights to a  
3 computer application, the method comprising:  
4           creating a plurality of security policies, wherein each security policy  
5 specifies a level of security for the distributed computing system;  
6           distributing the plurality of security policies to each computer in the  
7 distributed computing system;  
8           selecting a specific security policy from the plurality of security policies  
9 for use across the distributed computing system; and  
10          informing each computer in the distributed computing system to use the  
11 specific security policy.
- 1           2.       The method of claim 1, wherein the level of security includes a  
2 specific security posture.
- 1           3.       The method of claim 1, further comprising using secure  
2 communications for distributing the plurality of security policies to each computer  
3 in the distributed computing system.
- 1           4.       The method of claim 1, further comprising signing each security  
2 policy in the plurality of security policies with a cryptographic signature to allow  
3 detection of unauthorized changes.

1           5.       The method of claim 1, further comprising distributing the plurality  
2 of security policies from a computer in the distributed computing system to a  
3 subordinate computer.

1           6.       The method of claim 1, wherein selecting the specific security  
2 policy for use includes selecting the specific security policy based on a security  
3 posture.

1           7.       The method of claim 6, wherein informing each computer in the  
2 distributed computing system to use the specific security policy includes using  
3 secure communications for distributing the security posture indicator to each  
4 computer in the distributed computing system.

1           8.       The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of security policies  
2 includes a default security policy, wherein the default security policy is selected  
3 by a computer within the distributed computing system if the specific security  
4 policy is defective on that host.

1           9.       A computer-readable storage medium storing instructions that  
2 when executed by a computer cause the computer to perform a method for  
3 managing security policies in a distributed computing system, wherein security  
4 policies determine access rights to a computer application, the method  
5 comprising:

6           creating a plurality of security policies, wherein each security policy  
7 specifies a level of security for the distributed computing system;

8           distributing the plurality of security policies to each computer in the  
9 distributed computing system;

10           selecting a specific security policy from the plurality of security policies  
11   for use across the distributed computing system; and  
12           informing each computer in the distributed computing system to use the  
13   specific security policy.

1           10.    The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the  
2   level of security includes a specific security posture.

1           11.    The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the  
2   method further comprises using secure communications for distributing the  
3   plurality of security policies to each computer in the distributed computing  
4   system.

1           12.    The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the  
2   method further comprises signing each security policy in the plurality of security  
3   policies with a cryptographic signature to allow detection of unauthorized  
4   changes.

1           13.    The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the  
2   method further comprises distributing the plurality of security policies from a  
3   computer in the distributed computing system to a subordinate computer.

1           14.    The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein  
2   selecting the specific security policy for use includes selecting the specific  
3   security policy based on a security posture.

1           15.     The computer-readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein  
2     informing each computer in the distributed computing system to use the specific  
3     security policy includes using secure communications for distributing the security  
4     posture to each computer in the distributed computing system.

1           16.     The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the  
2     plurality of security policies includes a default security policy, wherein the default  
3     security policy is selected by a computer within the distributed computing system  
4     if the specific security policy is defective on that host.

1           17.     An apparatus that facilitates managing security policies in a  
2     distributed computing system, wherein security policies determine access rights to  
3     a computer application, the apparatus comprising:  
4             a creating mechanism configured to create a plurality of security policies,  
5     wherein each security policy specifies a level of security for the distributed  
6     computing system;  
7             a distributing mechanism configured to distribute the plurality of security  
8     policies to each computer in the distributed computing system;  
9             a selecting mechanism configured to select a specific security policy from  
10    the plurality of security policies for use across the distributed computing system;  
11    and  
12             an informing mechanism configured to inform each computer in the  
13    distributed computing system to use the specific security policy.

1           18.     The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the level of security includes a  
2     specific security posture.

1           19.     The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising a secure  
2     communications mechanism that is configured to distribute the plurality of  
3     security policies to each computer in the distributed computing system.

1           20.     The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising a signing  
2     mechanism that is configured to sign each security policy in the plurality of  
3     security policies with a cryptographic signature to allow detection of unauthorized  
4     changes.

1           21.     The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the distributing mechanism is  
2     further configured to distribute the plurality of security policies from a computer  
3     in the distributed computing system to a subordinate computer.

1           22.     The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the selecting mechanism  
2     includes a policy selecting mechanism that is configured to select the specific  
3     security policy based on the security posture.

1           23.     The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the informing mechanism  
2     includes a secure communications mechanism for distributing the security posture  
3     to each computer in the distributed computing system.

1           24.     The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the plurality of security  
2     policies includes a default security policy, wherein the default security policy is  
3     selected by a computer within the distributed computing system if the specific  
4     security policy is defective on that host.